Strong CIA Oversight Loses

By Walter Pincus
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The Senate Rules Committee yesterday brushed aside recommendations for a powerful, permanent intelligence oversight committee and voted 5 to 4 to establish a select committee with authority to continue investigations of the intelligence community only for another 15 months.

As proposed by Rules Committee Chairman Howard W. Cannon (D-Nev.), the new select committee would report back to the Senate on July 1, 1977, after looking into exactly the same areas explored during the just completed 15-month inquiry by the select committee of Sen. Frank Church (D-Idaho).

The Cannon proposal was substituted for a permanent oversight committee recommended by the Church committee and approved in March by the Government Operations Committee. The permanent committee would have had legislative and budgetary authority over the Central Intelligence Agency and all other intelligence agencies.

The membership of the committee proposed by Cannon would be largely drawn from the four committees that already oversee parts of the intelligence community.

Two members would be drawn from the Armed Services, Judiciary, Appropriations and Foreign Relations committees and three other members would be named by the majority and minority leaders.

Cannon said that under his formula select committee members could take back to the permanent committees information on any wrongdoing and these committees could effect change through their budgetary authority.

Sen. Dick Clark (D-Iowa)

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criticized the Cannon plan. The members, he said, would come from the very committees that have not exerted effective oversight in the past.

The Rules Committee vote yesterday was a victory for Sen. John C. Stennis (D-Miss.), chairman of the Armed Services Committee, who strongly opposed establishing any new committee that would reduce his committee's jurisdiction over the intelligence agencies.

Cannon is a member of the Armed Services Committee.

Yesterday's action sets the stage for a fight on the Senate floor where Church and a majority of his committee will attempt to revive their idea of an oversight committee with legislative and budgetary authority over intelligence agencies.

That battle is expected to take place on May 10.

for the Church-proposed committee, said the Cannon oversight panel would have

According to informed sources, the Ford administration, at CIA urging, is searching for a way to organize a joint House-Senate intelligence committee.

Cannon said he favored such an approach and his proposed panel would explore that possibility.

The House dropped consideration of any new approach to intelligence oversight when its own select committee collapsed in January.

During the Senate Rules Committee consideration of the oversight bill, the Church committee's foreign intelligence report was made public.

Church and the majority of his colleagues had hoped disclosures from their investigation would fuel support for a strong committee.

Clark, who led the fight "no way to back up its recommendations" without control over intelligence agency budgets.

"It doesn't change in any signficant form the oversight of the past," Clark said, "and that was weaker than desirable."

Cannon defended his measure. "Is the problem to cut off a dog's head if he has done something wrong? I'm trying to solve the problem without taking the kind of steps that might jeopardize the intelligence community," he said.

The Rules chairman said the wrongs of the past are being remedied "by steps taken by the executive branch . . . and we will have an opportunity to try this (the select committee) and see. They have to report back next year."

Before approving the Cannon proposal, the Rules Committee yesterday passed several amendments to the Church-backed resolution.

The amendments, proposed by Sen. Robert C. Byrd (D-W.V.a), weakened the authority a permanent committe would have. Byrd said his amendments were aimed at perfecting the Church-backed measure in case it was approved.

Sen. Robert P. Griffin (R-Mich.) introduced an amendment under which the committee would have to get the approval of the full Senate before it could release information that the President did not want published.

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WITH RESPECT TO

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